Origins and Migrations: Where Did They Come From? Where Did They Go?

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**Recommended free webinar that complements this class: (available here: https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/setting-yourself-success-organizational-tools-and-tips-break-down-brick-walls)

- Setting Yourself Up for Success: Organizational Tools and Tips to Break Down Brick Walls, presented by Senior Genealogist Rhonda R. McClure

Step #1- Organize your previous research into an annotated research log

Use an annotated research log to record data. Blank templates can be found at American Ancestors: https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates

Step #2- Look for missing information and identify your goal

Once you have organized your previous research, you must then determine what information is missing. Define what you are looking for, such as:

- Birth date/place
- Marriage date/place
- Death date/place
- Maiden name
- Military service
- Parent's names
- Parent's place of birth
- Immigration year
- Naturalization status
- Sibling's names
- Children's names

- Next, determine what individuals or families intrigue you the most. Remember—it is best to tackle one line at a time.
- Create a list of questions or objectives to research. Include these objectives on your research log, even before you begin your research.

Step #3- Who's your F.A.N. club?

Locating FAMILY (F) in Records- What to Note

Cemetery Records

- Individuals buried around your ancestor
- Information on burial cards

Census Records

- All persons enumerated in a household
- Birthplaces
- Other households of the same surname living in the same town/county
- Similar profession

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Church Records
- Religious affiliation
- Admission to church
- Witnesses of baptisms/marriages

City Directories
- Other households of the same surname living on the same street/town/city
- Individuals with similar professions (skilled work)

Local Histories/Genealogies
- List of early/prominent settlers
  - When they came to the area
- Individuals with similar origins
- Individuals with similar vital and genealogical information

Land Records
- Frequent land transactions between the same individuals
- Frequent use of same witnesses
- Large amount of land sold for little money
- The phrase "in consideration of love and affection"

Naturalization Records
- Individuals with a similar birthplace or surname
- Individuals with a similar occupation
- Same Address
- Familiar witnesses

Newspaper Articles/Obituaries
- Obituaries can provide information on next of kin
- Society section
  - Individuals visiting family members
  - Participants in a wedding ceremony

Probate Records
- Wills listing heirs or administrators
- Division of Estate may list heirs, though no relationship may be listed
- All records in a probate file are important, including debts and credits

Town Records
- Other individuals or families who arrived in an area around the same time
- Individuals and families with the same surname

Locating ASSOCIATES (A) in Records: What to note

Religious
- Pastors/ministers/priests/rabbis, etc. who serve in your ancestor's parish/congregation
- Witness to religious family events
- Godparents included on baptismal, confirmation, marriage, and burial records
- Individuals and families belonging to the same church organization

Educational
- People who graduated in the same class
- Participants in the same sports or clubs
- Friends that signed your ancestor's yearbook
- Teachers or professors in their field at the time they attended
- Colleagues that published with an ancestor

Occupational
- Individuals with similar professions (skilled work)
- Employees and owners of the institutions where your ancestor worked
- Labor Unions or Workmen's Organizations your ancestor supported

Social
- Individuals belonging to the same:
  - Fraternal organizations
  - Genealogical organizations
  - Hobbies and/or hunting organizations

Political
- Political organizations your ancestor supported
- Tribal affiliations
- Loyalists (during American Revolution)

Place and/or migration
- Did your family reside in the same place for several generations? What other families did as well?
- Did your family migrate somewhere? What other families made the same migration?

Locating NEIGHBORS (N) in records- What to note

Military Pensions
- Affidavits of fellow soldiers
- Search for your ancestor, as they may have provided an affidavit for another soldier
- Witnesses providing testimony

Town Records
- Other individuals or families who arrived in town at the same time
- Others included on a list of proprietors
- Plot maps may identify your ancestor and reveal neighbors

Diaries and Day Books
- Your ancestor may not be named, but you will learn more about the community
- Often include birth, marriage, and death information for those of the town (and surrounding towns)
- Biographical information of residents
- Movements of neighbors
- Notable events

TIP: Use the Trails of Hope: Overland Diaries and Letters, 1846-1869 collection - https://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu/

Church Records
- Pew rentals and church seating plans
- Admission lists or parish membership
- Nearby cemetery or burial plots in the church cemetery

Probate Records

It is very important to examine all documents and determine the relationship between your ancestor and these individuals.

- Who was the administrator?
- Who was the bondsman?
- Who were the estate appraisers?
- Who witnessed the will?
- Which individuals appear on multiple occasions?

Step #4- List records that will aid in your research

List records that will aid in your research-
- Census (Federal and State)
- Vital Records (Birth, Marriage, Death)
- Church Records
- Land Records (Federal, State, County)
- Court Records (Probate, Civil, Criminal)
- Newspapers (obits, wedding notices)
- Naturalization records or Passenger Lists
- City Directories

A helpful chart identifying these records be found at American Ancestors- https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/getting-started

Find resources in repositories and online-
- Check both the online and physical holdings
- Contact historical societies, lineage societies, local libraries, genealogical societies, colleges and university archives, federal and state archives, town halls, etc. A great resource for manuscript collections can be found at ArchiveGrid: https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/

Map out your plan of action: Use an Annotated Research Log to keep an organized list of the resources that you checked or the resources that you plan to check: https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-templates

Step #5- Locate the resources
Educate yourself-
- Digitized Books:
  - https://www.hathitrust.org/
  - https://books.google.com/
  - https://archive.org/index.php
  - https://openlibrary.org/
  - https://books.familysearch.org
  - http://library.si.edu/digital-library
- Guide books:
  - Rhonda R. McClure, 6th ed., *Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research, 6th ed.* (Boston: NEHGS, 2021)
  - *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources*, 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2004)
  - *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy*, 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2006)
  - *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer*, 1st ed. (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2015)
- Portable Genealogists
  - Immigration to the U.S.
  - U.S. Naturalization
  - NY State Census
  - MA State Census
  - Using the Federal Census: 1790-1840
  - Using the Federal Census: 1850-1940
  - Organizing your Research
  - Problem Solving in Irish Research
  - 17th Century New England Research
  - Using DNA in Genealogy
  - African American Resources
  - Applying to Lineage Societies
  - Building a Genealogical Sketch
  - Genealogical Numbering
  - Editorial Stylesheet
  - Reference Notes
  - Indexing

- Research Guides: https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/research-guides
- Family Search Wiki: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page
- American Ancestors Webinars
- Upcoming- http://www.americanancestors.org/Education/Online-Classes/
  Archived- https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library

Step #6- Research

Perform the research as defined in your plan. Remember, the research plan is fluid, not absolute.

- Return to your original research plan to locate any holes or missed opportunities
- Be patient and open to alternative record groups and/or people of interest. For example, you may find more Family, Associates, and/or Neighbors of your ancestor (known as the F.A.N.) once you start the research process:

Step #7- Analyze and Draw your Conclusions

Write it down! Update your annotated research log with your notes and conclusions. If a longer explanation is required, consider using these resources:

American Ancestors Resources

Writing and Publishing Guide, https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/writing-publishing

Portable Genealogist Compilation: Writing, This easy-to-use compilation includes seven guides to help with your genealogical writing: *Building a Genealogical Sketch, Genealogical Numbering, Editorial Stylesheet, Reference Notes, Indexing, and Compiling a Bibliography*, plus *Applying to Lineage Societies.*

Robert Charles Anderson, *Elements of Genealogical Analysis: How to maximize Your Research Using the Great Migration Study Project Method,* (Boston, Massachusetts: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2014)

Penelope L. Stratton and Henry B. Hoff, *Guide to Genealogical Writing* (Boston: NEHGS, 2014)

"Follow the Money Approach"

- When vital records do not exist or have significant gaps, we turn to financial records to learn more about our ancestors
- This approach can be used to track an individual's movements through a country or overseas
- It can help clarify relationships between families

Types of Town Records

- Most town records have been digitized and are available on FamilySearch (note: few are indexed)
- Catalog>Search by Place>Enter name of Town>Search>Town Records
- **Ear Marks and Cattle Marks**
    - Owners mark their cattle and sheep with distinct patterns to prevent against theft
    - The marks were submitted to the town clerk to be registered
    - Marks could be passed down from father to son
    - Only one son could inherit the father's mark

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- Registered marks could also be sold (part of the owner's estate)
- **Pauper and Orphanage Records**
  - Town officials were responsible for supporting the poor and orphaned children
  - Guardians may be appointed to care for orphans who were heirs to property
  - Orphaned children may be "bound out" to learn a trade or sent to an institution like an orphanage
- **Indenture Agreements**
  - Legal contracts made between an indentured servant and an employer "master"
  - Outlines the duration of servitude and the rules that the servant and master will abide by

Land Records

- Use census records, including the non-population schedules to identify ancestors who owned land
- **Deeds**
  - Legal document transferring ownership of property from one person to another
  - Grantor = seller
  - Grantee = buyer
  - Kept at the county level
  - Connecticut, Vermont and Rhode Island are stored at the town level
  - Tip: If the deed sale is less than $1, this indicates a relationship between both parties

- **Homestead Act of 1862**
  - Signed in 1862, this law allowed any American (including freed slaves) to purchase up to 160 acres of federal land
  - Buyer was required to live on the land and perform necessary upkeep and additions
  - Use the Bureau of Land Management web site to search for land patents in the U.S.
  - Land entry files can be obtained from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Files are being digitized and added to Ancestry.com at https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60593/.

Military Pension and Bounty Land Records

- **Revolutionary War Pension History**
  - 24 August 1780 – Congress passed an act to offer pensions to widows and orphans of Revolutionary War soldiers
  - 1818 – Congress passed a resolution granting pensions to veterans who were not disabled but were having financial difficulties – lifetime pension

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- 1832 – Full pay for life to officers and enlisted men who served 2+ years; partial pay for 6 months to 2 years
- Original files are kept at the National Archives, Washington D.C. (digitized and available on Fold3.com)

- **Pension Roll of 1835**
  - In 1834/1835, the U.S. Senate passed a series of resolutions requiring a list be compiled of pensioners who were drawing pensions for service in the Revolutionary War
  - Some War of 1812 veterans may be listed
  - Most appear in later pension rolls
  - Available on Ancestry at https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60514/

- **Military Bounty Land**
  - Federal government provided bounty land for those that served in the following wars:
  - Revolutionary War
  - War of 1812
  - Mexican War
  - Indian Wars (1775-1885)
  - Claimed by veterans or their heirs
  - Applications recorded the veteran's age and residence at the time of application

- **Revolutionary War Databases:**
  - U.S. War Bounty Land Warrants, 1789-1858 - https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1165/
  - United States Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Magazines, 1800-1900 - https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1417475

- **War of 1812 Pension History**
  - 1871 Act – provided pensions to veterans who served at least 60 days or to their widows if they married before 1815
  - 1878 Act – provided pensions to veterans or their widows, who served at least 14 days
  - Pension files are being added to Fold3.com
  - For files not available, request from the National Archives, Washington D.C. using the NATF-85 form
  - Link: https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records

- **Civil War Pensions**
  - Federal pensions were granted to Union veterans and their surviving family (spouse, children, parents, dependents)
  - Federal pension files are kept at the National Archives, Washington D.C. (widow's pensions being digitized and added to Fold3)
  - Use NATF-85 form to request a copy of pension
  - Link: https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/pre-ww-1-records
  - Union pensions can be searched in the U.S. Civil War Pension Index (1861-1934) - https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/4654/
  - Confederate pensions were granted by the individual states
  - Link: https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/confederate/pension

Probate Records
- **Common Terms:**
  - **Testate**: dies with a Last Will & Testament.
  - **Intestate/Administration**: dies without a will.
  - **File Papers**: the original documents associated with the probate file.
  - **Record Books / Copy Books**: copies of certain probate files copied into bound record volumes.
- **Wills**
  - A will is a legal document where property is transferred upon the party's death to family, friends, servants, business partners, and the community
  - Kept at the county level where the deceased had their primary residence
  - Wills can include the following:
    - Names of children (and their spouses)
    - Name of spouse
    - Names of grandchildren, nieces/nephews
    - Names of servants
    - Names of enslaved persons
  - **Codicil**: An addition or change to a will
- **Inventories**
  - A list of the deceased's belongings and property was taken and distributed to heirs
  - Keep note of the persons who took the inventory - they may be family or close friends/business partners
- **Accounts**
  - List of debts owed to the estate
  - List of debts the estate owes to others

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- Published in newspapers
- **Distributions**
  - Dividing an estate among heirs
  - Occurs after bills are paid and debts collected
  - Heirs (children, widow, etc.) mentioned in distribution
  - Genealogical importance:
    o List of children if vital records aren't available
    o Married names of daughters
    o Children of deceased heirs
- **Guardianships**
  - Appointed for minor children
    o Males: under 21
    o Females: under 18
  - Guardians protected the inheritance of minor heirs to an estate
    o Can provide financial support
    o After the minor child becomes of age, the guardian is released
    o Guardian would then make an account of compensation

Tax Records
- **Poll Tax**
  - Tax levied as a prerequisite to voting
  - Massachusetts was the first to enact the poll tax in 1646, followed by New Haven in 1649
  - Abolished in 1964 when 24th Amendment was passed
- **Taxes on Real and Personal Estates**
  - Tax rolls may detail the type of structures they have on the estate (house, farm, mill, etc.)
- **IRS Tax Assessment Lists**
  - 1 Jul 1862 – Bureau of Internal Revenue was created (later renamed to Internal Revenue Service)
  - The United States was divided into collection districts
  - Two lists created
  - A list of names of individuals subject to taxation who lived in the division
  - A list of names of individuals who lived outside the division but were owners of property in the division

Employment Records
- Search the catalogue on genealogy web sites and sites like ArchiveGrid to locate employee records that pertain to your ancestor

Railroad Records

- Pensions granted by the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board starting in 1934
- Ancestry.com has the Pension Index for 1934-1987 -
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61597/
- Original claim files can be obtained from the National Archives, Atlanta, Georgia -
https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/public/railroad-retirement-board-records
  - Each railroad company has their archives, which may include employee records
    - Ex. Southern Pacific Rail Road - https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2046/
  - U.S., Panama Canal Zone, Employment Records and Sailing Lists, 1884-1937 -
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61857

Publications

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Hatcher, Patricia Law. *Locating Your Roots: Discover Your Ancestors Using Land Records* (Cincinnati, Betterway Books, 2003)

Lainhart, Ann S. *Digging for genealogical treasure in New England town records*. (Boston, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1996)
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Williams, Elizabeth Thompson. *The Apprenticeship of Children in the New England Colonies* (Boston, Boston University, 1928). Available at Archive.org at
https://archive.org/details/theapprenticeshi00will.

Wilson, Donald A. *Interpreting land records*. (Hoboken, Wiley, 2006)

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Websites

- American Ancestors – www.americanancestors.org
- American Ancestors External Databases (at home) www.americanancestors.org/Search/External-Databases
- Ancestry www.ancestry.com
- ArchiveGrid https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/
- Bureau of Land Management https://glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx
- FamilySearch www.familysearch.org
- Find My Past www.findmypast.com
- Fold3 www.fold3.com
- GenealogyBank www.genealogybank.com
- National Archives www.archives.gov

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